THE TRIAL OF JESUS

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THE TRIAL OF JESUS

OTHER PLAYS BY JOHN MASEFIELD

THE FAITHFUL
MELLONEY HOLTSPUR; OR, THE PANGS OF LOVE
A KING'S DAUGHTER
ESTHER. (*Adapted and partially translated from the French of Jean Racine*)
BERENICE. (*Adapted from the French of Jean Racine*)

POETRY BY JOHN MASEFIELD

COLLECTED POEMS
SELECTED POEMS
THE DAFFODIL FIELDS
DAUBER
ENSLAVED AND OTHER POEMS
GOOD FRIDAY
KING COLE AND OTHER POEMS
LOLLINGDON DOWNS AND OTHER POEMS, WITH SONNETS
PHILIP THE KING AND OTHER POEMS
A POEM AND TWO PLAYS
REYNARD THE FOX
RIGHT ROYAL
A KING'S DAUGHTER: A TRAGEDY IN VERSE

OTHER WORKS BY JOHN MASEFIELD

SARD HARKER: A NOVEL
GALLIPOLI
ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
THE OLD FRONT LINE

THE TRIAL OF JESUS

BY

JOHN MASEFIELD

LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD.

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M87

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BERKELEY BAPTIST DIVINITY SCHOOL
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TO

MY WIFE

44484

This Play was privately performed at the Music Room, Boars Hill, on May 9th, 1925, at 8 p.m.

BY THE FOLLOWING COMPANY

THE PRAYER	JUDITH MASEFIELD
LEADER OF CHORUS	BERTHA PHILIPS
CHORUS ... ... *Women*	MARGARET McINTYRE
	JOYCE BARNES
	HEATHER McINTYRE
Men	F. A. WOOD
	WILFRID MAY
	IAN HAY
WISDOM	LILLAH McCARTHY
JESUS	BASIL MAINE
PETER	JULIAN HUXLEY
JUDAS	GRAVELEY EDWARDS
OFFICER	H. CHESTERMAN
MALLUCH	A. K. BOYD
SHOBEK	T. JONES
REUBEN	
AMOK	P. S. MILLS
ZADOK	LESLIE DAVEY
ANNAS	G. DUDLEY BARLOW
CAIAPHAS	ERIC BUSH
1ST MAID	JULIETTE HUXLEY
2ND MAID...	VIOLET JESSEL
PILATE	PATRICK O'HARA
PETRONIUS	CYRIL VINCENT
LONGINUS...	JULIAN HUXLEY
PROCULA	GWENDALEN KEATINGE
MARY, the Mother of Jesus ...	JULIETTE HUXLEY
MARY MAGDALENE	JUDITH MASEFIELD
MARY, Wife of Cleophas ...	NORA O'HARA
KING HEROD	GRAVELEY EDWARDS
1ST SOLDIER	FRANK SMITH
2ND SOLDIER	SIDNEY SMITH

The Chorus was trained and directed by

MISS SYBIL JACKSON.

THE PROLOGUE

The Prayer

O divine energy who wields the stars,
Stir us to glitter in our path this day
That what we can we may.

O divine beauty, alive by mortal toil,
Live here by what we do in this poor place
That men may see thy face.

O divine helpers, who like fire descend
To aid the struggling brain, come down, come in,
Let a new world begin.

O, if we call, our spirits may be doors
To those whose courage bears mercy and peace,
Beauty and joy from shining corridors
Whence comes the singing that may never cease.
O to our spirits come
Mercy, peace, beauty, joy; make here thy heaven,
thy home.

(*The* Speaker of the Prayer *will enter from between the curtains, speak in front of them, and retire through them at the end. As she retires, the* Chorus *above will begin*

to sing, the curtains will be drawn, the upper doors will open, and the CHORUS *will enter the gallery, singing, men to Right, women to Left; they will come down the stairs, cross the stage, and take their places on the front stage.* WISDOM *will appear from the curtains at the back of stage. The body of* PETER *will be seen sleeping on the stage to Right.* JESUS *will be standing down stage Left.*)

CHORUS. *Haydn air.*

(CHORUS *entering from upper gallery.*)

In old Troy town, King Priam's seven-towered citadel,
Both rich in gold and bright with spears,
The girl Kassandra had the gift
To see into
The darkness of the future time;
And saw Troy burn and Priam go to dusty death.
This she foretold; men called her mad, but ruin fell on Troy,
And now the fruit trees drop their leaves where Priam's
City shone with golden roof and carven temple towers.

Thus in our days, the wise man seeking truth in
misery
And finding her in some dark place,
Proclaims her presence to the world
And calls aloud
How beauty dwells in the feared dark
And how the night is quick with unexpected life;
This he proclaims; men call him mad, and torture
him to death,
And stamp his corpse beneath the stones and call
that he
Blasphemes the gods, till future ages prove his truth.

We here to-night look backward nineteen hundred
years of Time
At Him who strove that men might share
The presence of the God he knew.
Now, even now,
His spirit peers into the dark,
Foresees his end, his body nailed upon the cross,
His friends afraid, his teaching mocked, his spirit
wrung with doubt;
Foreseeing this, he calls on God and feels his
wisdom
Give eternal strength to shrinking human flesh.

WISDOM. Child of intense thought, son of light
and truth,
You stand to-night at parting of the ways.
Man, you have followed wisdom all your days,
The beauty of God has overflown your heart,
Truth has been rapture to you, you have known
Happiness so intense that flesh and bone
Have shared the divine life.

You cannot care
To shape in art the beauty that you share;
Nor yet to use your talents to seize power
Over your fellow-men.

You ask but this:
To go where your poor suffering brother is,
And give him of your life and make him feel
That God is in him and about him always.

* * * * * *

Your intense life gives life and cannot die
Because it goes, past flesh, into All Thought,
And from that great sea brings back to the world
A beauty undying that is God eternal.

* * * * * *

O happiness past utterance to do thus.
But now that you have chosen to do thus,

You earn the pay of those who bring new thought.
The new thing, that the new mind reckons precious,
Is an accurst thing to the soul of custom.
So through your ministry your utterance
Has been called blasphemy, your healing, magic.
Your teaching red rebellion and delusion.
You have not heeded these your enemies,
Your ministry has been a joy.

JESUS. A joy.

WISDOM. It has been joy also to your disciples,
The men who love you; you also love them.

JESUS. I love them.

WISDOM. You think that you are safe among such friends.
You are in danger, and the three most dear
Sleep, caring nothing, while a fourth most fiercely
Denounces you as false before the Council.
Even now the takers of the thieves are coming
To drag you to be tried. Therefore consider
Where what you are and what you teach may bring you.

JESUS. To death in public shame, outcast of men.

WISDOM. You speak in few words hours of agony.
What will support you through those hours?

JESUS. Love.

WISDOM. Not love of friends; you have no friends, not one.
No single soul who loves from understanding
And will abide. You will be all alone,
Deserted, publicly denied, assailed
By your own race, your rulers, and the Romans.
Have you considered what this loneliness
May mean, in such a strife?

JESUS. Yes.

WISDOM. And the strife?
Your soul against the world: think what that means.
The shame of an arrest like a street thief.
The trial as a felon, stared at, ordered,
Thrust hither and thither, bullied, browbeat, threatened,
Warned, tempted into traps, and all the while
Condemned, despite the mockery of justice.
Then, mean men's rage smiting your helplessness;
You, with bound hands, spat at and buffeted,
Spat at and seared with insults from clenched teeth,
The sneered lips of the dog-pack in men snarling.
Then, scourging till your bones are bare; then, dragging
Through the thronged city, pelted, followed, mocked
By boys and ruffians come to see your pain.

All this before your mother and your friends.
Lastly, that body that has borne your soul,
That intimate friend, your body, and your hands
That have obeyed your bidding all these years,
Will be, at others' bidding, by other hands
Seized, all against your will, your struggles vain,
Stretched to the place and nailed through to the beams.
Then you will hang above a place of skulls,
Licked by dogs passing, pecked by waiting crows,
Your rags torn off by beggars, bare to the sun,
Bare to the flies, bare to the frost at night;
A day in dying, two days dying, three
Long days and nights in dying, every minute
Like a long age of fever and being mad;
The passers stirring you with sticks to prove
If you be still alive to further pain.
Lastly, your felon's corpse has unclean burial;
An end to you and to your minist'rings.

JESUS. No, not an end to me.

WISDOM. Death is the end.

JESUS. Upon all them that Hope God's mercy is.
God having touched me, will not let me go.

WISDOM. Grant that you outlive death, your teachings end,
They will be damned as devilish through your nation.

JESUS. The price I pay will make them dear to men;
A man must pay himself if he buy truth.

WISDOM. You may not have the strength to pay yourself.
Even now your body shrinks from such an end.

JESUS. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

WISDOM. Ay, weaker than you think, being tried so fiercely.
What if the trial be too grim a test?
What if your body or your soul surrender
And you deny your teaching, so that men
May ease your torment, spare and set you free?
So that you live indeed, but live despised
Even by yourself. You are not toughly knit.
Surrender may be the end of all your thought.

JESUS. My soul is sorrowful even unto death.

WISDOM. Sorrow and death await you in few hours,
If you persist upon your chosen course.
Yet you have time to fly, to return home,
Comfort your mother, live as other men,
And taste the happiness of men on earth,
With wife and children, friends and fair old age.

JESUS. O God, my Father, if it be possible,
If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.
Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.

WISDOM. The cup thy Father gives, wilt thou not drink?

JESUS. O friend, I am the cup my Father gives,
The blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

WISDOM. God has created all men for His glory.
He has sent words to men to be their help:
"Behold, I will do a new thing . . . shall ye not know it?
I will even make a way in the wilderness."

JESUS. If this cup may not pass, except I drink,
I will; Thy will be done.

WISDOM. Life comes to you;
Life will be with you: even on the cross
You will be one with life.
Life is the solace
Wrung out of suffering: drops of blood wrung out.
The footsteps of the bringers to the grave
Approach: behold, the hour is at hand.

(*The figure of* WISDOM *disappears.*)

(JESUS *walks over to* PETER'S *body.*)

JESUS (*to* PETER). Sleep on now, take your rest: it is enough.

The hour is come; behold the son of man
Is betrayed into the hands of sinners. (*Waking him*).
Rise, let us go; he that betrays me is here.

(*Enter from the Left side of the main hall,* OFFICER, JUDAS, MALLUCH, SHOBEK, *etc., etc., with swords, staves and lanterns. They go up the stage from the front.*)

JUDAS (*to* OFFICER). Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he.

Take him and lead him away safely.
O Master, hail, Master! (*Kisses* JESUS.)

JESUS. Judas, betrayest thou the son of man with a kiss?

OFFICER. In the name of the High Priest I make you prisoner.

PETER. Lord, shall we smite with the sword? Take your hands from him. (*Smites at a man.*)

JESUS. Suffer ye thus far.

MALLUCH. I am cut on the head.

OFFICER. Keep your men from us or you will fare the worse.

JESUS. Put up your sword, for all that take the sword

Shall perish with the sword; think'st thou I cannot
Pray and be saved? But now thus it must be.

OFFICER. Yes, thus it must be : so, come quietly.

JESUS. Are you come, as against a thief, with swords and staves?

When I was daily with you in the Temple
You laid no hold upon me.

OFFICER. For good reason.
You had your crowd : it was your hour then,
Now it is ours : give me the bonds there : so.

JESUS. This is your hour and the power of darkness.

Curtain.

CHORUS. *Horn Dance Air.*

(*Between Prologue and Act I.*)

Now they go to the High Priest's house, where witnesses clamour and say their says;
How he would tear the Temple down and build it again within three days;
How he has practised magical arts and bidden his race not pay their dues;
How he has daily preached and taught doctrines that Rabbis refuse.
Much they dispute, much they allege, yet does not their witness agree :
Hither the priests come to debate what the man's errors may be.

ACT I

OFFICER. Hear all: in the case of Jesus of Nazareth:—

The Court adjourns: the Court adjourns: the Court adjourns. Make way for the High Priest, Lord Annas! Make way for the High Priest, Lord Annas!

(ZADOK *follows the* OFFICER *down the Left stairs.* ANNAS *follows* ZADOK.)

ZADOK. Will you be seated, Lord Annas?

ANNAS. Thank you, I will stand.

OFFICER. These are the depositions, Lord Zadok.

ZADOK. Yes. I shall need those.

OFFICER. About the witnesses, Lord Zadok, are they to stay?

ZADOK. What do you think, Lord Annas, shall we retain the witnesses?

ANNAS. Those whom we have heard? You must keep the man Judas.

ZADOK. Yes, my lord. And the others?

ANNAS. If it were not the Feast-time, Lord Zadok, I would detain all the other witnesses on the charge of perjury. Most of them lied from stupidity, no doubt, but some lied from malice.

ZADOK. I am grieved that you thought that, my lord.

ANNAS. I am grieved that I had to think it. I will consider charging them. Let them attend here at noon.

OFFICER. Very good, my lord.

ANNAS. Those whom we have not yet heard must of course stay. You had better warn them, Officer, that even if they are not called to give evidence here, they may have to give evidence before Pilate.

OFFICER. I took it on myself to warn them of that, my lord.

ANNAS. You did rightly.

OFFICER. Thank you, Lord Annas. May I repeat, Lord? The evidence Judas and those who have not testified are to stay. Those who have testified are to appear before you at noon?

ANNAS. Yes.

(*The* OFFICER *salutes and goes upstairs.*)

We must deliberate without Lord Caiaphas. He has been called to the barracks about some riot.

ZADOK. I heard that there had been a disturbance.

ANNAS. There is too much incitation to disturbance. Did you hear Lord Caiaphas preach last night?

ZADOK. No, Lord Annas.

ANNAS. Many did, I hear.

Now, about this teacher, Jesus. The witnesses so far have been most untrustworthy, ignorant and prejudiced; but this last man, the evidence Judas, is of a different kind and brings a capital charge.

You have the record of this Jesus, the teacher: will you read it to me?

ZADOK. Surely, Lord Annas. (*Reads.*) The accused man Jesus is a native of Nazareth, in Galilee, the son, born out of wedlock, of Joseph, a carpenter and builder, and of Mary, a dresser of women's hair. He is spoken of as irreverent to his parents. He is of rather more than thirty years of age. He has been preaching and teaching for some years. He was driven from Nazareth some months since for disputing about the scriptures.

ANNAS. In what way?

ZADOK. Misinterpreting texts, to prove himself a prophet, it would seem: this in the synagogue.

ANNAS. Indeed.

ZADOK. After this, the wilder spirits in Galilee urged him to lead a rebellion: this he refused.

ANNAS. It is quite clear to me that he is no rebel, except in things of the spirit. I see him as a follower of John. Continue.

ZADOK. He is lax in his observance of the Sabbath, and preaches similar laxity in other matters. As to this, the testimony is overwhelming.

ANNAS. Yes, yes. I have no doubt of all that.

ZADOK. On his coming to the city five days ago, he was hailed, mainly by the Galileans here, in a certain way. Entering into the Temple, he and his followers rioted and brawled with the traders. Since then he has preached daily in the Temple, using language so wild that some questioned his sanity.

ANNAS. He is sane. He is very intelligent.

ZADOK. The language was such that we should have been forced to make this inquiry, even had not the other evidence been brought to us.

ANNAS. Yes. So much for the record against. What have you in his favour?

ZADOK. He has a power of healing, in nervous cases. He has a great knowledge of the scriptures.

He has eloquence and a personal charm which sways women and young men.

ANNAS. Yes; the force which helps him to heal the unbalanced. Now as to his teaching, what is it?

ZADOK. His teaching is not that of John, Lord Annas. It is, that the Kingdom of God is in the heart, and that he who enters deeply into his heart, enters the Kingdom of God, where all are brothers. He holds that life begins only when we enter that spirit of brotherhood. He holds that certain sects check or kill all living in that spirit. In the evidence just now you heard his passionate indignation against such sects.

ANNAS. I liked that: it was honest: it was an image of God's anger against shams.

ZADOK. You liked it, Lord Annas?

ANNAS. Yes, and like this man; but his influence is another thing. Transferred to women and young men who have neither his intellect nor his probity, the good Father alone knows where it may end. But here is my son-in-law.

ZADOK. Welcome, Lord Caiaphas.

CAIAPHAS. Father, and you, Lord Zadok, I am in great distress. Give me your counsel.

I was preaching last night to the multitude. I said that I hoped that the days were not past when some brave Jew would dare to die for Israel. The man, Bar-Abbas, thought that this was my command to him. He went out, raised a riot, wounded some Roman soldiers, and men were killed. He was taken red-handed, and is now in the cells. Pilate swears to have him hanged by noon.

ANNAS. "Bloodthirsty men shall not live out half their lives." Son, you must measure language when you speak to these wild ones. Madmen like Bar-Abbas will not free us from the Romans, who have the coolest and best brains now in the world. God and virtue will save this race, not madness.

CAIAPHAS. Will you see Bar-Abbas, who risked his life for Israel, die thus?

ANNAS. He disgraced Israel by breaking our law no less than the Roman.

CAIAPHAS. If you will let him go, I shall despair for Israel.

ANNAS. I have watched God's providence for seventy years, my son. The word "despair" must not be spoken in this house. Despair when murder goes unpunished: until then, hope, and trust.

Pilate will deal justly with the murderer.

Come now and help us to deal justly. We have to test the truth of this man, Jesus, about whom you heard the evidence.

CAIAPHAS. There was nothing in the evidence that I heard to justify our sending him to Pilate. It was plain that he had talked wildly; but it was confusedly reported and the witnesses contradicted each other. We could, of course, send him for contumacy; but I am against that.

ZADOK. I, too; but we can send him for claiming to be—what he claims to be.

CAIAPHAS. No, we cannot. We have only one witness that he makes that claim.

ZADOK. A truthful witness; that man Judas spoke the truth.

CAIAPHAS. You thought so? I thought him prejudiced and angry.

ANNAS. Not so, son-in-law; he is a sincere, zealous, upright man, trusted by this man Jesus and his disciples to carry their purse. He was so shocked at the claim being made, that it was he who urged Lord Zadok to make this inquiry. He loves this Jesus; he loves our great law, too.

CAIAPHAS. His evidence is not enough. The law is plain. There must be two witnesses.

ANNAS. Not if the accused admit the charge or make the claim before us.

CAIAPHAS. He will not even speak before us.

ANNAS. If charged in a certain way to speak, he will do so.

CAIAPHAS. Grant that he do, and that he deny the charge, what then?

ANNAS. If he deny it, our course is clear, we shall discharge him, under certain safeguards; but I do not think that he will deny it.

CAIAPHAS. Then, if he admit it, if we send him to Pilate to sentence and execute, will that be right or wise?

ANNAS. It is our duty as guardians of the law of this people.

CAIAPHAS. I ask, will it be right or wise, to send yet another brave Jew to die by Roman hands?

ANNAS. He ceases to be a Jew if he make this claim.

CAIAPHAS. I say that we cease to be Jews when we send even our criminals to an alien judge. Who is Pilate that he should judge us?

ANNAS. Pro-curator of Judæa, appointed so by God's Providence as best for us. We, humbly, under that Providence, will cast out from among us all who break God's law, whether by murder or by

abominable claim. It is for you, son-in-law, as God's High Priest, to do this.

CAIAPHAS. I say that it is for me, as leader of this people, to deny the right of Rome to rule us. We bow down to foreign gods whenever we admit that right.

ANNAS. Son, Judæa is a little grain between two millstones. You, or Bar-Abbas, or any other zealot, will extinguish this race if you provoke Rome to turn upon us.

In the meantime, it is our great Feast; this matter of justice must be done. Let us have the man Jesus brought in, with the witness, and then charge him to declare if he make the claim. Do you agree?

ZADOK. I agree, Lord Annas.

CAIAPHAS. Let it, then, be so: you are wiser than I.

ANNAS. Not wiser; older.

CAIAPHAS. I trust none the less that he will deny the charge.

ANNAS. I trust that the truth may be made manifest. Pray with me that it may be so.

(*They stand to pray.*)

O Lord our God, Who, by a pillar of fire, leddest our fathers out of Egypt, now guide us, we beseech

Thee, by the light of Thy truth, to find the truth, in this our service to Thy law, that we, finding the truth, may judge justly in the charge committed to us. Amen.

ZADOK. Shall I give word that the Court reassemble?

CAIAPHAS. We want only the prisoner and the witness, Judas.

ANNAS. No; let all the witnesses attend.

ZADOK. Very good, Lord Annas. (*He calls in the Court.*)

ANNAS. Let there be silence, and truth, and justice among us.

THE CROWD. Amen.

ANNAS. We are here to try the rightness of the teaching of this man Jesus.

Judas, of Kerioth, come forward.

JUDAS. I am here, Lord.

ANNAS. Repeat to us what you have heard the accused man say.

JUDAS (*to* JESUS). Master, I say this, first. Until that woman anointed you with the holy spice, I believed you to be a prophet.

ANNAS. You are not to speak to the accused, but to us here.

OFFICER. Tell Lord Annas what you heard him claim.

CAIAPHAS. First answer me this, Judas. On your soul's verity, you have no grudge nor anger against the accused?

JUDAS. No, Lord.

CAIAPHAS. You were of his little company. You had no quarrel with him?

JUDAS. Not till I heard him say that he was the son of God.

ANNAS. When did he say that?

JUDAS. Three days ago, to several of us. At first I thought he meant that God is his Father, as He is of all of us. But next day he let a woman anoint him as the Christ. He accepted that as the Christ.

I could not pass that. I told him, straight out, that that would have to be inquired into.

ZADOK. Very rightly.

ANNAS. What did he say that showed that he claimed to be the Christ?

JUDAS. He said that he was the Good Tidings who would be preached throughout all the world.

CAIAPHAS. Jesus, you have heard this witness. Do you wish to question him?

(*No answer.*)

ANNAS. You have the right, of course, to challenge

or deny this evidence. You may question him in any way.

(*No answer.*)

CAIAPHAS. Before how many people were these words said?

JUDAS. All of us, and Simon and the women; nearly twenty.

ANNAS. What Simon was this?

JUDAS. Simon the Leper, Lord, at Bethany: it was at his house.

ANNAS. Is Simon here?

ZADOK. No, Lord; he cannot be found.

ANNAS. Nor any other of these twenty?

ZADOK. They are all scattered into the city, Lord, partly from fear of question, and then for the festival.

CAIAPHAS. Were these people shocked when the accused made this claim?

JUDAS. I will only answer for myself, Lord Caiaphas.

ANNAS. It is enough.

OFFICER. We shall have some of them in the course of the morning, my Lord.

ANNAS. What did you mean, Jesus, when you used the words sworn to by this witness?

(*No answer.*)

Give me the record, will you? (*To* ZADOK.)

JUDAS (*to* JESUS). I told you where all their flattery would lead you. Their praise has turned you from God. Humble yourself again, like you did at first, and you'll be white as you were. Beat down your spiritual pride.

OFFICER. Silence! Silence!

ZADOK. It is not for you to preach to the accused.

CAIAPHAS. Still less is it for you to condemn him.

JUDAS. I ask pardon, masters. O God, God, God, I loved this man!

Masters, I am not well in my head. I am a very violent man. I am not used to these places.

ZADOK. It might be well, Lord Annas, if this witness were allowed to leave court.

ANNAS. He shall leave soon. Let him sit down, Officer.

CAIAPHAS. Jesus, do you admit the evidence of that man? (*Pause.*) Do you deny it?

ZADOK. Do you care to produce any witness in your favour?

ANNAS. We do not wish you to incriminate yourself or any of your company, but to offer a defence, either by yourself or through others.

CAIAPHAS. Stubbornness cannot help you; frankness may. Will you answer nothing?

JESUS. If I ask you questions, you will not answer me.

CAIAPHAS. What is it that this man charges you with?

JESUS. If I tell you, you will not believe.

ANNAS. We, as priests, may only believe the revelation of God, Jesus.

JESUS. Has God ceased to reveal Himself?

ANNAS. God forbid. But we are not here to discuss that. Do you wish to question this witness Judas?

(*No answer.*)

CAIAPHAS. I suggest, then, that Judas be allowed to go.

ZADOK. We shall be able to corroborate his evidence later in the day, no doubt. Do you agree, Lord Annas?

ANNAS. If the accused will not question him—— (*No sign.*) He may go.

ZADOK. You may go, Judas.

(JUDAS *goes.*)

ANNAS. See that the evidence Judas remain within call during the next hour.

OFFICER. I will tell him, Lord Annas.

ANNAS. Jesus, we are priests dedicated to the guarding of the faith by which we live, and into which you were born; we now require an answer from you touching your soul.

ZADOK. On your soul's verity answer the High Priest.

CAIAPHAS. Jesus, I abjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

JESUS. You have said it, not I. Nevertheless, I say hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.

ANNAS. Take the accused aside, Officer.

(JESUS *is led up stage. The* PRIESTS *come to the lower stage.*)

ANNAS. That was not an answer. The question must be put again.

CAIAPHAS. I consider it a sufficient answer.

ZADOK. No, no, Lord Caiaphas. They were wild words with no meaning.

CAIAPHAS. There was insolent defiance in every word.

ZADOK. He is a country fellow. He does not

know how to address you, but the words were no reply to you.

ANNAS. No; they were not: they were vague words. We will now ask him, in turn. Be seated.

(*They sit.*)

Bring the accused before us. Answer me and be careful how you answer. Jesus, art Thou the Christ, the son of God?

CAIAPHAS. Jesus, art thou the Christ, the son of God?

ZADOK. Jesus, art thou the Christ, the son of God?

JESUS. I am.

MALLUCH. Ah, listen to that.

SHOBEK. He said he was.

AMOK. He can't have understood what was said.

REUBEN. Hush, hush! Wait for what the high priests say.

OFFICER. Hush, hush, hush! now. No talking. The high priest has risen.

CAIAPHAS (*rending his garment.*) He has spoken blasphemy. What further need have we of witnesses? Behold now you have heard his blasphemy. What think you?

THE CROWD. He should die! Stone him! Fling him from the walls and stone him! Stone him!

ANNAS. Officer, silence these people.

OFFICER. Keep silence! I charge you, silence Silence, everybody.

CAIAPHAS. He stands condemned.

ZADOK. I am truly grieved: grieved to the soul. May God our Father forgive him.

ANNAS. Jesus, we have heard your own lips condemn you on the charge of blasphemy, to our minds the gravest charge that can be brought against a Jew, upon whose race the special mercies of God have ever been manifest. Were our race a free people, it would now be my duty to cause you to be led out of this city and there stoned to death for your offence. God has so ordered it that I am spared, I thank Him, that terrible task. But I have the scarcely less terrible task of now casting you out from the protection of our mild and merciful law and committing you for trial in the courts of the Romans. You will be taken to Lord Pilate forthwith.

(*Pause.*)

You will be taken to Lord Pilate forthwith. But even now, at this last moment, our gentle law pre-

scribes that you be given one more chance. Do you wish to bring any witness or witnesses to give evidence in your favour?

(JESUS *does not answer.*)

It is my duty to call aloud, "This is Jesus, the Nazarene, cast for blasphemy. Is there anyone within hearing who will give evidence on his behalf?"

OFFICER. Here is Jesus, the Nazarene, cast for blasphemy. Is there anyone within hearing who will give evidence on his behalf?

CAIAPHAS. Bring the papers to the Council to be sealed.

(*The* THREE PRIESTS *go upstairs.*)

OFFICER (*to* JESUS). You ought not to have answered like that to the High Priest. Have you had any food this morning?

(JESUS *shakes his head.*)

You'll need food. You're going before Pilate. You'll be lucky if you escape from him with less than scourging. You cannot stand scourging without food. Man, they can kill you with it if they take a grudge against you. I'll have some food ready for you and find a chance for you to have it before you go. And when you come before Pilate, answer; don't make your case worse than it is.

JESUS. He that is near me is not far from the fire.

OFFICER. You're not far from the fire.

JESUS. But he that is far from me is far from life.

OFFICER. Not so far as you'll be, if you keep that tone with Pilate. I suppose you have got a defence reserved; and that gives you confidence. But humbly does it, with Pilate.

(*Enter* TWO MAIDS *to tidy the room.*)

1ST MAID. Who have you got there, Micah?

OFFICER. This new prophet.

(OFFICER *goes out.*)

2ND MAID. A prophet? Prophesy me a nice husband.

1ST MAID. To me, too.

2ND MAID. Fancy wanting two, you bold thing!

1ST MAID. He doesn't look like a prophet.

MALLUCH. We'll see if he can prophesy. Wait a minute. Lend us that duster. (*He blindfolds* JESUS.)

Now, one, two, three,
Prophesy to me
Who gave you that?

REUBEN. Spin him up and spin him down,
Spin him all around the town;
Prophesy who was that?

MALLUCH. We ought to anoint a prophet. Give us your bucket, girl. Who was that, and who was that, and who was that? Dirty Galilean blasphemer!

AMOK. And who was that, prophet? That's for dragging me here before daylight, this cold morning.

(OFFICER *re-enters.*)

OFFICER. Now stop all this. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves treating a prisoner like this. I have a good mind to bring you along with him and charge you, too. I wonder you have no shame.

1ST MAID. Where are you taking him to, Micah?

OFFICER. I am going to put the bonds on him. I'll give him some food too. Come on here.

(*He takes* JESUS *off.*)

1ST MAID. He wasn't really a prophet.

MALLUCH. He! No.

AMOK. I am perished with cold. Let's come to the fire.

2ND MAID. What will be done to the fellow?

MALLUCH. He'll go before Pilate and then he'll be hanged.

1ST MAID. You ought not to have touched him, if he's going to be hanged.

MALLUCH. All we did is too good for him.

2ND MAID. He's the man that was in the Temple all the week?

REUBEN. Yes, causing disturbances.

2ND MAID. Yes, I saw him.

1ST MAID. What a lot of strangers! I'm sure I don't know what you are all doing in the High Priest's house.

2ND MAID (*to* PETER). You were with him. You were with this man Jesus.

PETER. I never was. I do not know him.

REUBEN. You are one of them.

PETER. I am not, man.

(PETER *goes away to the porch. The cock crows.*)

AMOK. Cock-crow. Changing of the watch. Pilate will be holding his court in half an hour.

1ST MAID. That is one of them.

MALLUCH (*fetching* PETER). So I think. Yes, you are one of them. You're a Galilean. One can tell by your speech. Come on and face the court. You're one of those damned blasphemers.

PETER. Damn you! I swear I don't know the man.

(*Cock crows.*)

MALLUCH. Well, we'll get the truth out of you,

though. Why, I saw you with him in the garden when Malchus's ear was cut.

1st Maid. Hush! Here come the lords.

(*Enter* Caiaphas *above.*)

Caiaphas. Is the officer there?

Malluch. He's just below, my lord. I'll bring him. Officer, the lord priest wants you.

(*Re-enter* Officer.)

Caiaphas. Come here, Officer. These are the sealed depositions and the commitment order. You will take the prisoner Jesus to Pilate for trial, according to the sentence of this court.

Officer. Deliver this with the prisoner to Lord Pilate? I will, my lord. (*He goes up to* Caiaphas, *takes the orders and returns.*)

Caiaphas (*when* Officer *is on the stage*). And you, good people, I have a word to say to you. At this our great feast of deliverance, it is the custom of Lord Pilate to deliver each year one prisoner to us, according to our choice. Reflect, then, that it is for you to choose the prisoner to be delivered. Whom, then, will you choose? Surely not robbers, like Dismas and Gestas? Still less, surely, a blasphemer and contemner of God, like this Galilean here? Will you not choose one who risked his life

for you, who struck a blow for you, and is now to die for you? Will you not choose the brave Bar-Abbas, who fought for you, only last night? Surely Bar-Abbas will have your voices?

THE CROWD. Yes! Bar-Abbas! Bar-Abbas!

CAIAPHAS. Then the blessing of God go with you, my people.

OFFICER. And on you, lord Caiaphas.

MALLUCH. Amen to that, lord Caiaphas.

OFFICER. Stand back from the prisoner. He has got to come to Pilate.

MALLUCH. We will set him on his way to Pilate.

SHOBEK. We're not going to beg you off. Don't think it.

AMOK. Pilate will know how to deal with you.

OFFICER. Now keep clear of him.

(*He rings a bell and cries:* "Here is Jesus, the Nazarene, cast for blasphemy. Is there anyone within hearing, who will give evidence on his behalf?" *He goes out, leading Jesus and followed by the crowd. The three priests come down to the brazier.*)

ZADOK. We have no other case, then, until after the Feast. How beautiful warmth is. Yet it is a forward Spring. I never saw such flowers, so early.

CAIAPHAS. The lilies are out in my garden. You preach to-night, Father?

(ANNAS *nods.*)

ZADOK. May we know your text?

ANNAS. Deliverance.

ZADOK. A great text for this great time.

ANNAS. The only text, for all time.

ZADOK. Truly, there is nothing more marvellous.

ANNAS. We are all in Egypt, making bricks without straw for strangers.

(*Enter* 1ST MAID, *Right.*)

1ST MAID. I crave pardon, my lords.

ANNAS. What is it, child?

1ST MAID. The man Judas, the witness, craves the blessing of a word with you, my Lord Caiaphas.

CAIAPHAS. What about?

1ST MAID. Some question of returning money, I think, my lord.

CAIAPHAS. I know nothing of it. What money?

1ST MAID. He did not say, my lord.

ZADOK. Possibly the money he received as our informer.

CAIAPHAS. He ought not to come to me about it. Still, let him come.

1ST MAID. Thank you, my lord. (*The* MAID *goes.*)

(*Enter* JUDAS, *who kneels.*)

CAIAPHAS. Well, what is it?

JUDAS. My lord priest, will you tell me what has been done to that man who was here, the man Jesus?

CAIAPHAS. He has been condemned and removed to Lord Pilate.

JUDAS. And what will be done to him there, my lord?

CAIAPHAS. I do not know.

JUDAS. But they said, lord, outside, that it might be death.

ANNAS. It may very well be death, by crucifixion.

JUDAS. Crucifixion! Him!

ZADOK. Yes, if Lord Pilate thinks as we think.

JUDAS. But crucifixion means blasting body and soul for ever and for ever!

CAIAPHAS. Even so. Blasphemers are blasted.

JUDAS. But you told me that you only wanted him to explain himself, to reprove his errors. He is a good man, not a bad man, not a blasphemer. He was only boasting.

ZADOK. You must not try to teach us, who are priests of the Most High God, what this man, your friend, was.

JUDAS. But, my lords, I must. And here's the money; look, I haven't spent it; I haven't touched it. Now give him back; bring him back here and set him free. Look here, my lord, all the thirty pieces.

CAIAPHAS. What do you bring this money to us for?

JUDAS. Because I want you to have it back and give him back.

ANNAS. We have no more to do with the man. If you wish to amend your evidence about him, you must go to Lord Pilate and state your case to him.

JUDAS. And will Lord Pilate let him go?

ANNAS. Perhaps, Lord Zadok, you will explain to this man.

(*He signs to the others and goes out upstairs, Left.*)

JUDAS (*to* ZADOK). Lord, will Lord Pilate set him free?

ZADOK. How can he set him free? The man is a blasphemer. He is condemned and without earthly hope.

(JUDAS *rolls on the floor.*)

JUDAS. Oh, God! God! God!

ZADOK. You must not behave thus here. Control yourself.

JUDAS. I have sinned; I have sinned; I have sinned! I have betrayed innocent blood. Oh, my Lord Caiaphas, I have betrayed innocent blood!

CAIAPHAS. What is that to us? See thou to that.

JUDAS. Yes, I will see to that. There's your silver. I betrayed that man, but I will be hanged before him. You will find me hanged this day. I will be blasted first, Lord Jesus.

(*He goes out crying* :—)

I am accursed, accursed, accursed!

ZADOK. A desperate associate of a desperate man.

CAIAPHAS. These zealots from the south are a dangerous people. All harsh, sudden and merciless, like their land.

(CAIAPHAS *claps his hands for the* MAID, *who re-enters.*)

Has that man, the guide, gone?

MAID. Yes, lord, gone out crying.

CAIAPHAS. Pick up that bag and take it to the Temple treasurer.

ZADOK. May I stop her for one moment? It

will not be lawful to put the money into the treasury, because it may be reckoned in a way the price of blood.

CAIAPHAS. True.

ZADOK. Might I suggest that we use it to buy that field, where the potter works, to make a graveyard for strangers? The city sadly needs such a graveyard.

CAIAPHAS. Yes. Well thought of. Will you take the bag to the steward then, girl, and tell him what we say? I will speak to him later, tell him.

MAID. Very good, my lord.

(*She goes, with bag, off Left.*)

ZADOK. Nothing remains, then?

CAIAPHAS. Yes; one thing remains, Lord Zadok; to save Bar-Abbas from death. My father-in-law no longer sees things as I see them, as we see them, as Israel sees them. Bar-Abbas, our Deliverer, goes to death like a stalled ox. If at this Feast of our Deliverance our Deliverer may not be set free, I will raise all Jerusalem to save him.

ZADOK. O, my lord, have a care!

CAIAPHAS. I will save him alive, even if I die.

CURTAIN.

CHORUS. *Iphigenia Music.*

In the west lands, good for apples, is a brook which flows
From the woodlands to the grasslands, singing always as it goes;
And I know that if I trace it to its thorn-grown spring,
I shall find the Queen of all things sitting waiting for her King,
Sitting with the thorn to hide her,
Sitting with a fawn beside her,
Waiting for what golden man the golden hour may bring.
But the care of living blinds her from our mortal eyes,
And the thorn-leaves wither round her and her blackbirds cease to sing.

There were Kings who went to seek her in the days long since,
Melchior, Baltasar and Gaspar, each a wise man and a prince;

Far they wandered under heaven where a star burned bright,
Seeking for the Queen of all things who should bring the world delight:
From the camps of the Assyrians,
Through the seaports of the Tyrians,
Over deserts without water through the thorn-scrub white,
Under sun and moon they sought her, crossing land and sea,
But they never saw her shining at the thorn-grown spring like light.

When they wearied of the journey through the wind-blown Down,
Lo, the star stood still before them at the inn-yard of a town;
And they looked upon each other, thinking, "Here we find
Her, the Queen of the immortals, who brings beauty to the mind,
Her whose beauty's shadow fed us,
Her whose beauty's shining led us,
Her who shall be Queen of us to rule all human kind."

But within were beast and stranger and a newborn
babe,
Whom they pitied and gave gifts to and dismisst and
left behind.

Now they wander over ocean in their age-long quest,
Following ever where the sun goes dropping down
into the west,
And they think, "Perhaps to-morrow we shall find
her trace,
And go up the singing water and behold her face to
face;
Feel her beauty end our sorrow,
It will be perhaps to-morrow
She will rise and speak with us and bless us with her
grace;
She whose joy is payment for the search twice told,
She whose word is wisdom and whose service perfect
rest."

PILATE. So here their Festival begins again, with the customary riot. I will have no mercy on rioters. The man, Bar-Abbas, must die. What other cases have we?

PETRONIUS. The priests have sent up a case, Lord Pilate, on some semi-religious matter. The prisoner and witnesses are below.

PILATE. I will take the case at once. We must finish at watch-end because of the Feast.

PETRONIUS. Very good, my lord. Centurion, bring those people into the court.

LONGINUS (*off, on the Right*). Bring the case into court, my good lord. Pass up there, through the door.

(*He enters, with* OFFICER, JESUS *and* WITNESSES.)

PETRONIUS. Who is in charge of this prisoner?

OFFICER. I am, my lord.

PETRONIUS. Have you any depositions?

OFFICER. They are here, my lord.

PETRONIUS. Keep back a little further.

(PILATE *gives a sign.*)

Hear all of you, the Governor Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judæa, deputy of the Imperial Power, is here present to give audience. All who have charges to bring before the Imperial Power should here present them. I command you to keep silence in the name of the Emperor.

PILATE. I declare this place a court of the Imperial Power. What charges do you present, Petronius?

PETRONIUS. The priests send you a prisoner, Lord Pilate. The name is given as Jesus, a builder. Here are the depositions.

PILATE. This court cannot accept depositions from a native court. Is this the man?

OFFICER. Yes, my lord.

PILATE. What accusation do you bring against him?

MALLUCH. If he were not unfit to live, we should not have delivered him up to you.

PILATE. So you bring a capital charge against him?

VOICES. Yes, lord.

PILATE. A capital charge already heard by the High Priests?

OFFICER. No, lord. The High Priests examined him, but felt that you must judge him.

PILATE. Very well; what has he done?

OFFICER. He is a blasphemer.

MALLUCH. He is a bastard born in sin, and he breaks the Sabbath.

AMOK. He practises magic.

SHOBEK. He preaches heresy.

PILATE. You, Officer, are these your witnesses?

OFFICER. Yes, Lord Pilate.

PILATE. Swear them.

PETRONIUS. You who intend to testify, come forward. Hold up your hands. Your right hands, not both your hands. Take oath, all of you, by all that you hold sacred, that you speak nothing but the truth.

VOICES. We swear to speak nothing but the truth.

PETRONIUS. The witnesses are all sworn, my lord.

PILATE. Now let me hear the charges.

MALLUCH. We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar. . . .

AMOK. Saying that he himself is Christ a King. He says that our laws are not laws. . . .

SHOBEK. And that we are not to pay Roman taxes. No more Roman taxes, nor levies. . . .

REUBEN. That you are not king, but he is. . . .

PILATE. Silence. One at a time.

OFFICER. Lord Pilate, if you will give me leave, I will present this case in order.

PILATE. I am not aware of any need of help in the conduct of this my court. Let that man stand forward there; you, fellow, were sworn as a witness; what do you say against the prisoner?

MALLUCH. We found this fellow perverting the nation.

PILATE. What do you mean by the nation?

MALLUCH. Our nation, the Jewish nation.

PILATE. Oh! the Jewish people. How perverting them?

MALLUCH. Teaching them lies against our law.

PILATE. Lies against your law? I do not know what a lie against a law may be. Give me an instance in his very words.

MALLUCH. He said that nobody need keep our law.

PILATE. When and where did you hear him say that?

MALLUCH. The day before yesterday in the Temple.

PILATE. In saying this, did he mean that the

Roman Code had superseded your usual procedure, or that all are free to be lawless?

MALLUCH. He meant that our law is not worth that.

OFFICER. Lord Pilate, it was an irreligious remark, because we believe that our laws were given to us by God Himself.

PILATE. So I understand, from having to administer them. Was this all that the prisoner said? Did you hear him "teach," as you phrase it, any other "lies"?

MALLUCH. No, luckily for him.

PILATE. Why was it lucky?

MALLUCH. Because I would not have endured it.

PILATE. I wonder that you endured this one remark. Perhaps you did not? Did you?

MALLUCH. What is the good of anyone loving our law when you administer it?

CROWD. Yes. What is the good? Tell us, Pilate?

PILATE. I should have thought that the gift of God would be precious to you. What did you do, the day before yesterday, when you heard the prisoner make this remark?

MALLUCH. I found a priest and told him. He

sent for me last night to repeat what I heard to the High Priest: now I have repeated it to you.

PILATE. Did any other of your witnesses hear the prisoner say the words sworn to by this witness?

(*No answer.*)

This is unsupported testimony, then?

(*No answer.*)

I treat the words, therefore, as the expression of opinion as to the value of laws which may or may not be binding under Imperial jurisdiction. I dismiss that charge. No, not a word. What other charges do you bring?

CROWD. He forbids to give tribute to Cæsar. He is a false prophet. He is a blasphemer.

PILATE. Silence. Speak you, there, for them.

OFFICER. Lord Pilate, his chief offence is that he claims to be Christ, our King.

PILATE. Let me have evidence that he makes this claim.

OFFICER. Lord, five days ago I myself saw this man riding into the city upon an ass. His disciples were waving branches and hailing him as King.

PILATE. His disciples, not he, made the claim then?

OFFICER. Lord, he accepted the claim. He let

those men cry that "he was the Kingdom of our father David, come in the name of the Lord."

PILATE. I do not understand that. What was meant?

OFFICER. Lord, we believe that a King, descended from our father David, will indeed come in the name of the Lord, to rule us. He claimed to be that Blessed One. No Jew, not making that claim, would ever allow men to hail him so. Besides, there are men here—this man, and that man—who saw him hold a court as King.

PILATE. Come you, then. Speak.

AMOK. Lord, five days ago I saw his disciples spread their clothes under him and cry, "Hail, thou King! Save us, thou who art the highest!"

PILATE. Save them from what?

AMOK. From Roman rule, Lord.

PILATE. And what did he do, at that appeal?

AMOK. He led them to riot in the Temple.

PILATE. You heard him encourage them to riot?

AMOK. I saw him lead them to attack in the Temple.

PILATE. There is no Roman rule in the Temple.

AMOK. He led them to attack the foreigners there.

PILATE. What foreigners? There are no foreigners. The Temple is Jewish. What does this fellow mean?

OFFICER. He attacked the Temple traders, Lord Pilate. They are often foreigners. He flung them out of the courts and freed their doves. It was a disgraceful scene.

PILATE. And you: speak, you.

SHOBEK. Lord, I saw him drive out the traders; but I also saw his young men crowning him with palms and crying that he was "our King, come in the name of the Most Blessed."

PILATE. He accepted this crowning?

SHOBEK. Yes, Lord.

PILATE. What steps did you take on hearing this?

SHOBEK. I went to tell the Council, lord.

PILATE. Jesus, you hear what these witness against you? Do you say nothing?

JESUS. They would say nothing unless the power were on them. They must answer to it.

(PILATE *comes down and goes on to the fore-stage.*)

PILATE. Come here, then. Are you the King of the Jews?

JESUS. You say that I am.

PILATE. You *are*, then, the King of the Jews?

JESUS. Do you ask this of yourself or did others tell it you of me?

PILATE. Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you unto me. What have you done?

JESUS. My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews, but now is my kingdom not from hence.

PILATE. So you are a king?

JESUS. What you say is true, for a king I am. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice.

PILATE. What is truth?

JESUS. "Truth is from heaven.

PILATE. Is truth not upon earth?

JESUS. You see how those who speak the truth are judged by those that have the power upon earth."

PILATE. Do you claim to be an earthly king here? Plainly you do not. (*He turns back to his seat.*) Officer, I want evidence that the prisoner himself

makes this claim of being King. Have you any such evidence?

OFFICER. One of his disciples gave sworn evidence to the High Priest on that point this morning, my lord.

PILATE. Let me hear him, then.

OFFICER. His evidence is in the depositions, my lord.

PILATE. I want the man himself. Where is he?

OFFICER. I am sorry to say, my lord, that since he gave evidence he has killed himself.

PILATE. Then we may conclude that he was not of sound mind when he testified?

OFFICER. He was of sound mind, lord. He killed himself when he heard that his evidence had caused the prisoner to be condemned.

PILATE. You two men, come forward. Did you hear or see this man make any claim to be King, or issue a command as King? Did he order his disciples to make this riot in the Temple?

AMOK. I did not hear him order.

SHOBEK. He gave the example. He upset the first stall.

PILATE. Were you near him?

AMOK. Yes, lord, as near as I am to you.

PILATE. Now think carefully, both of you, for this is an important point: what did he say as he led this attack upon the traders?

AMOK. He cried out something to the traders and upset the first stall.

SHOBEK. He said, "My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves."

PILATE. Did you hear him make any claim that he was driving out these traders as their King?

SHOBEK. Yes, lord. He called the Temple "my house."

PILATE. And you?

AMOK. I was watching what he did, my lord; I did not pay attention to the words.

OFFICER. May I speak, Lord Pilate, to correct the witness? The words "My house shall be called a house of prayer" are quoted from our sacred writings. They are not the prisoner's own words.

PILATE. That coincides with my own impression, that this man does not claim to be a King, but a teacher. I see no ambition in all this; but moral indignation.

What character has this man among his people? What is his record?

OFFICER. My lord, the man has been stirring up

the whole people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee and then coming down here.

PILATE. Beginning from Galilee? Is he a Galilean?

OFFICER. Yes, lord.

PILATE. I have no jurisdiction over Galileans, as you well know. King Herod, the tetrarch, is the judge of Galileans. Take him to King Herod. I break up this court. Petronius, precede this prisoner to King Herod and explain in person by what means he was brought to me.

PETRONIUS. Very good, my lord. Lord Pilate declares this court to be broken up. Those who wish to bring charges against this prisoner must follow to King Herod's palace.

PILATE. One moment, Officer, before you start. I shall take steps to let Lord Annas know my mind about this case, which ought never to have been brought before me. This is not the first time that cases have been wrongly sent to me. The result of such carelessness is, inevitably, ill-feeling between the jurisdictions.

OFFICER. I'm sure, my lord, that such is not Lord Annas' intention.

PILATE. I do not ask for your comment. Dismiss.

(PETRONIUS, OFFICER, JESUS, *the* GUARDS *and the* CROWD *go out.*)

PILATE. "You see how those who speak the truth are judged by those who have the power." A strange man! What is truth? What you will give your life for. But men will give their lives for any folly and any lie. Yet what you give your life for must be a shadow of truth. An odd fellow, that: a lot in him.

PROCULA. Pilate! Pilate!

PILATE. Yes. What is it, wife?

PROCULA. What have you done to the teacher Jesus?

PILATE. Sent him to Herod.

PROCULA. Thank God for that. What will Herod do to him?

PILATE. Reprimand him and send him back to Galilee.

PROCULA. Not more than that?

PILATE. No. You know what Herod is. What do you know about this teacher?

PROCULA. I heard him last year . . . and I had a terrible dream about him. O Pilate, have nothing to do with that just man.

PILATE. Just? I'm not so sure of his justice.

He has been doing justice according to his lights in the Temple, upsetting poor men's stalls; raising riots. I want no more of such justice.

PROCULA. I believe that that man is one of the great men of our time.

PILATE. He *may* be. Meanwhile I *am* the keeper of order here. You think me an old-fashioned fellow with a narrow mind; but I have seen more of these teachers than you, and how their teaching ends. They begin with talk about truth and justice, with women saying "How lovely!" They end in pillage, burning and murder all over a province. You may laugh; but I have seen it. You sow wild talk in a wild heart and you'll reap violence.

This man is better than most of them, but his talk will have the same results. They talk these plausible platitudes with passion, and passion follows.

PROCULA. So it should. All things should be passionate.

PILATE. I disagree. Judgment should not be passionate. Careful work of any kind should not be passionate. And talk between husband and wife in a foreign land far from home, should not be passionate.

PROCULA. Pilate, if Herod should condemn this man, could you interfere?

PILATE. No.

PROCULA. But you think that there is no chance of Herod's condemning him?

PILATE. Not on the evidence I heard.

PROCULA. But do you think that there is any?

PILATE. Not to death, certainly.

PROCULA. Or of sending him back to you to put to death?

PILATE. None whatever; he is a Galilean.

PROCULA. Yes, but he is in your province here.

PILATE. Even so, Herod will reckon him as his own.

PROCULA. I wonder. Pilate, promise me, by all that you hold sacred, that you will not kill this man.

PILATE. What was your dream about him?

PROCULA. I dreamed that while he was saying beautiful things, you killed him, and it was the end of the world.

PILATE. Now listen, wife. His priests, who are learned and worthy men—I know them all, and they are that, even if they hate us—have sent this man to me for making a dangerous claim; a very dangerous claim.

PROCULA. He is not a dangerous man, Pilate, but good.

PILATE. A man may have faultless morals and yet be like Greek fire to his community. So with this man. If it fall to me to judge him and the evidence condemn him, I shall have him killed, whether he says beautiful things or ugly things, even if it end the world. That is what I have sworn to Cæsar. There may be a higher law than our law. . . .

PROCULA. There is, there is. There's the law that all know when they are deeply stirred. In love and art and joy there's a higher law.

PILATE. In love and art and joy; yes; but not in this world. You have never lived in this world (thank your gods for the shelter): I have. It is not a world of love and art and joy, but of hate, envy and snatching at your brother's bread; shuffling through the one minute and drugging yourself against the next. Love and art and joy, indeed: men are not like that.

PROCULA. This man says that they might be . . . and that they are, in their real selves.

PILATE. Well, while they appear to cheat and rob and murder, I will deal with those appearances. Meanwhile your teacher goes to Herod for troubling

the city's peace. Come in. We will ask what Herod has done to him.

(*They go off, Left.*)

(*The* WOMEN *of the* CHORUS *rise and deck the stage with flowers as for the Festival.*)

(*They sing.*)

Sometimes I think that these wild lilies grow
Out of some land where foot may never go,
Out of some life that we may never know;
That we may never know.

Sometimes I think that the salt desert sand
Lives, in each grain, with all God ever planned;
Lives, as we might, if we could understand;
If we could understand.

(*The* THREE MARIES *enter at back, Left.*)

Sometimes I think that every earthly thing
Holds the three seeds of prophet, priest and king;
Of sceptre and of censer and of wing,
Fiery and brooding wing.

LEADER OF CHORUS. O women of Jerusalem, whom do you seek?

MARY MAGDALENE. We were told that the man, Jesus, was to be tried here. This is his mother.

Has he been tried? O tell us what was done to him!

LEADER. He has been sent to King Herod's court; he is there now.

MARY MAG. Has he been sentenced?

LEADER. I do not know.

MARY MAG. (*to the* TWO MARIES). The court is only a minute's walk from here: under the arch and across the yard. Shall we go there?

MARY, WIFE OF CLEOPHAS. Shall we? Can we? Should we be allowed to go in, if we went?

LEADER. Everybody may enter Herod's court.

MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS. I have not strength to go. Do you go: I will stay here.

LEADER. You need not fear for your son, Mother. Herod turns all things to mockery. He will jest at him and fine him and send him home.

MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS. You think that? Oh, bless you for those words. But my son is not like other men. He will have no priest that is not a saint and no king that is not a god. He will answer Herod according to his mockery, and then what will the end be?

LEADER. Go to the court, then, and warn your son: it is there, where the lamp burns over the gate.

But stay, the end has been reached already; they are coming back, as I said, with jesting and laughter.

MARY, MOTHER. Oh, is he set free? God bless King Herod!

MARY MAG. Yes, it is he, indeed.

MARY, WIFE OF CLEO. Oh, let us go to him; quickly, quickly!

(*Enter* LONGINUS.)

LONGINUS. Stand back from this entrance! Stand back! yet further back. Make way here. You may not pass this way. The court is assembling. Stand over there, you women. (*He marshals the women over to the left, well down stage.*) Is Lord Pilate within the palace?

LEADER. He is there in the palace, centurion.

(LONGINUS *goes off, Left.*)

(PETRONIUS *enters Right with* SOLDIERS, WITNESSES, JESUS *in purple, crowned, holding a reed, etc. The* LEADER *resumes her place.*)

MARY, MOTHER. O my son, my son! What are they doing to him?

MARY MAG. It is nothing; it is some mockery. Come over here and say nothing. We must not anger them.

(LONGINUS *re-enters.*)

LONGINUS (*to* PETRONIUS). I have warned Lord Pilate, sir. He will be here at once.

PETRONIUS. Prepare for the Imperial deputy. Salute.

(PILATE *enters.*)

PILATE. Make your report, centurion.

PETRONIUS. I bring a message from King Herod, Lord Pilate. First, he desires me to tell you how very deeply he was pleased by your courtesy in sending him this prisoner, whom he had long desired to see. Next, he adds that he will honour himself by waiting upon you, to thank you in person, at sunset this evening. Lastly, he says, through me, that there should be but one head in Jerusalem at this time, and that that head must be yours, Lord Pilate. He therefore desires that you will try the prisoner.

PILATE (*bringing* PETRONIUS *down to the front stage.*) What is all this costume that they have put upon him?

PETRONIUS. Herod's soldiers made him a mock king, my lord.

PILATE. I hoped to be quit of this man.

PETRONIUS. Would it not be possible, my lord? These Jews are claiming your yearly mercy of

releasing some prisoner at this Feast: why not release him?

PILATE. It is left to their choice: they will never choose him. But well thought of, Petronius. Let us try that. (*He goes up into the balcony.*)

PETRONIUS. Silence, all of you, for the will of the Imperial deputy.

PILATE. You people of the Jews, at this your Feast of Deliverance, it is my custom to release one of the prisoners now in charge.

(*Cheers.*)

This great mercy is granted by the clemency of the Emperor himself, whom may God preserve.

This custom is a pleasure and a privilege to us, but it is also a great responsibility. It gives to all, for a moment, the power of life and death over our fellows. It behoves us to use this privilege with anxious care.

Let me then tell you what prisoners there are under sentence here now. First, two robbers and murderers, Dysmas and Gestas, breakers of all laws, human and divine. I ask you not to ask for the release of either of these.

(*Silence from the* CROWD.)

There are two other men here in bondage—the

man Bar-Abbas, condemned for riot and murder, and this other man, this so-called King of the Jews. Shall I release to you this so-called King of the Jews?

CROWD. No! no!

PILATE. Who, then?

CROWD. Bar-Abbas! Bar-Abbas!

PILATE. Consider carefully before you choose. This man Bar-Abbas was the cause of violent death in these streets only last night. This other man, whom you brought as one who perverts the people, I have examined before you. I find no fault in him. No, nor yet did King Herod, for I sent him to King Herod.

CROWD. Give us Bar-Abbas! We want Bar-Abbas!

PILATE. You are not making a very wise choice in preferring a murderer to a teacher. However, it is for you to choose. You decide, then, finally to choose Bar-Abbas?

CROWD. Yes, Bar-Abbas!

PILATE. What shall I do, then, with Jesus?

CROWD. Scourge him! Scourge him!

PILATE. Why? What evil has he done?

CROWD. Broken all our laws. Crucify him! Crucify him!

PILATE. You ask me to crucify him. I have heard your evidence. I find no cause of death in him.

CROWD. No cause? He is a blasphemer. He was born in sin. He is a denier of God and a rebel.

PILATE. I find in him cause of punishment, grave punishment. I shall punish him. Bring the man forward, you.

(JESUS *is brought forward.*)

Jesus, I have heard and weighed the evidence against you. On the first count, that of teaching sedition, the evidence broke down. On the second count, that of committing overt acts against Jewish and Roman authority, the evidence is more precise. Luckily for yourself, the chief evidence against you has already gone before a more strict tribunal than this, and also luckily, one present here was able to speak decisive words in your favour. But for these two facts it would have been my duty, under the law which I serve and administer, to have sent you to your death. As it is, you escape the extreme penalty. You have chosen to aggravate your offence by refusing to plead. Contumacy is punishable by law. I shall, therefore, deal with you more harshly than I otherwise should have done.

I am inclined to believe that your intentions have been upright, even noble, ones. But those intentions, taught to ignorant and turbulent men, especially young men such as you seem to have about you, often result, and in this case have resulted, in disorderly acts, such as cannot be permitted in a civilised city. I cannot but hold you responsible for the disorders of your followers. I therefore sentence you to receive thirty-nine stripes of the scourge at the hands of the warranted officers in the upper court of these barracks. You will then be put outside the boundaries of the city under warning not to appear again. Have you anything to say against the justice of this sentence? See sentence done, Longinus.

LONGINUS. Very good, my lord.

(JESUS *is led off.*)

MALLUCH. Come, friends, we can see from here. They are tying him to the post.

AMOK. Thirty-nine stripes.

SHOBEK. They can break a man's spine with those scourges, if they wish.

REUBEN. Make way, friends. They'll let us into the courtyard.

(*The* CROWD *follows* JESUS *up the stairs on*

Right. PILATE *comes down, Left side, to front stage.*)

PILATE. I thought it better to sentence him on the evidence already heard than to hear more. The man is a good man; but this private goodness may be a public nuisance.

PETRONIUS. My lord, it is these religious fellows who cause all the real disturbance in the province. They need the strong hand.

PILATE. When a nation is so rotten that it is not worth preserving, its inhabitants exalt it into a god.

The Galileans will riot now, because the Jews chose Bar-Abbas.

PETRONIUS. It is a pity, my lord, that we did not hang Bar-Abbas last night.

PILATE. Bar-Abbas is not made for long life, Petronius.

(*Enter* ZADOK, *Right.*)

ZADOK. My Lord Pilate, the High Priests of this city desire audience with you.

PILATE. I will always gladly see the High Priests. Let them appear.

ZADOK. I will acquaint them, Lord Pilate, with your wish.

(*Enter* ANNAS *and* CAIAPHAS.)

ANNAS *and* CAIAPHAS. Greetings and peace be to you, Lord Pilate.

PILATE. And to you also, peace and greetings. I attend your plea, Lord Annas.

ANNAS. Lord Pilate, I work with you for the keeping of order among my people, in this city, at this most holy time. I sent you this morning one, Jesus, a disturber of the peace. We, the priests of our people, sent our depositions to you concerning him, which you thought fit to return to us unread. Lord Pilate, under our law this man is trebly doomed to death. First, though this count I do not press, he is a practiser of magic and opposer of certain parts of Jewish law, such as the keeping of the Sabbath. Secondly, he claims to be a king in Israel; and lastly, Lord Pilate, he claims that the world is about to end, and that he is that son of God, who, as we believe, will indeed be the salvation of this race, when this world passes.

PILATE. Lord Annas, do you not misunderstand his claims? Surely he is one of God's fools. I heard him make this claim to be a king, but the claim is surely moral only.

ANNAS. Lord Pilate, you do not understand how

much this promise, made to us by God through inspired prophets, means to all of our people. We know that after certain years of affliction this king will indeed appear among us to bring about a reign of heaven on earth. Our whole nation yearns in prayer for him daily and nightly. And we know certain signs by which he shall be recognised. He will come of the line of our great King David. He will come shining and he will sway peoples' hearts like a flame. The thought of his coming fills us all with an ecstasy of expectation. Consider, then, Lord Pilate, what this man's claim may mean to thousands of ignorant men, maddened by your presence in our holy city and thrilled by this great festival of our deliverance from Egypt. Consider what might happen among all these thousands of turbulent pilgrims, were they to think that their deliverer were here. And consider, Lord Pilate, what it means to us to see a man like this claiming to be this deliverer. He is no king descended from the royal line of David, but the bastard son of a woman of infamous life, a dresser of women's hair, and of her paramour, a village builder. We see this man, not even born in wedlock, unlearned, heretical, a flouter and contemner of laws and religious

observances dear to all our race. Were we a sovereign people once again, Lord Pilate, this creature would have been sent to a death of infamy by the voice of his race.

PILATE. You raise questions that were not raised in the evidence brought before me. I acquitted him on the capital charge, but have punished him with scourging, partly for what was proven, and partly for contumacy. What you say, of course, makes him an important political prisoner. It also gives him, if I may say so, Lord Annas, an importance which I do not think he merits, and, to my mind, does not seek.

ANNAS. Lord Pilate, the gravity of this case cannot be weighed by one not of our faith. You look for the fulfilment of no promise from your God. You have all things, Lord Pilate. Think, then, what the promise of our God means to us, who have only this promise.

PILATE. Lord Annas, I, too, have my religion—to serve my country as she bids. I believe in no God save Rome. I wish I did. But neither you nor any man can say that I am not tender to the religion of those whom I have to govern for Rome. You, as head of your race, shall have

judgment in this case. The man has been scourged, remember.

ANNAS. In our eyes, my Lord Pilate, the man's presence in this land is an offence to God, Scourging only weakens what should be annihilated.

PILATE. Lord Annas, I will examine the prisoner on the points which you have raised.

ANNAS. Surely, Lord Pilate.

PILATE. Petronius, if they have finished the scourging of that prisoner, bring him within.

PETRONIUS. I will, my lord. Stand aside, you people. Let me pass. Out of the way, there. Keep off those stairs. Get down where you belong, into the courtyard. Is that man scourged, Longinus?

LONGINUS (*off*). Sentence is done on him, my lord.

PETRONIUS. Take him out.

(LONGINUS *and* SOLDIERS *bring in* JESUS, *who collapses over the balcony.*)

PILATE. Behold the man. Bring the prisoner here, Longinus.

(JESUS *is led down.*)

Bring him aside here. I wish to question him. Answer me, Jesus. Who are you? Whence do you come?

(*No answer.*)

You will not answer? Do you not know that I have power to crucify you and power to release you?

JESUS. You could have no power at all against me, except it were given you from above. He who delivered me to you has the greater sin.

PILATE. If you had answered to the charges before the witnesses, it is possible that you would not have received this severe punishment. You were punished quite as much for keeping silence as for the offences proven against you. Since these witnesses were heard, much more serious charges have been brought concerning you—that you preach that you are the son of God, that the world is about to end, and that then you will be the king of the world. These are claims which neither your own race nor mine can permit to be made here. Your countrymen are even now making a tumult because of them. You realise, surely, that they are absurd claims, certain to lead to disorder here.

JESUS. I bring no peace but a sword.

PILATE. You are not allowed to bring a sword. I am straining all sorts of points to save you. I want to save you, for I do not think you see where your claims lead. I give you a last chance. Petronius, call those witnesses nearer.

PETRONIUS. Come nearer, you people.

(*The* CROWD *draws nearer.*)

PILATE. Jesus of Nazareth, will you deny before these witnesses that the world is about to end?

(*A pause.*)

Will you deny that you are the son of God, the promised deliverer? Will you deny that you are, or are to be, a king?

(*No answer.*)

You hear that the prisoner will not deny the claims that he is proven to have made. They are claims contrary both to Jewish and to Roman law. They are claims punishable by both codes by death. Bring a seat. I will proceed to judgment.

(LONGINUS *and a* SOLDIER *bring forward a seat.*)

PETRONIUS. Hear, all! Silence for the giving of judgment!

PILATE. Prisoner, you Jesus, builder or carpenter of Nazareth, have you anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon you? You have nothing to say? People of Jerusalem, it is our custom at this time to share in your great festival by releasing to you a sentenced prisoner. A few moments ago you chose a prisoner. I now, there-

fore, confirm your choice. I give order that the prisoner, Bar-Abbas, be pardoned and set free forthwith. Pass the word for his release.

PETRONIUS. Longinus, set the prisoner Bar-Abbas free.

LONGINUS. Set the prisoner Bar-Abbas free? I will, sir.

(*He goes off, and presently returns.*)

CROWD, 1ST MAN. Bar-Abbas is free!

2ND MAN. Blessings on Lord Pilate!

3RD MAN. Cheers for Lord Pilate!

4TH MAN. Bar-Abbas is set free!

5TH MAN. Do you hear, there? Bar-Abbas is set free!

6TH MAN. Hurray for Bar-Abbas!

OFFICER. Lord Pilate, on behalf of these my fellow-countrymen, I thank you for this mercy.

PILATE. May the prisoner make good use of it.

OFFICER. Amen, lord.

PILATE. Prisoner, for the third and last time, have you anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon you? So be it. You have been found guilty of words and acts against the peace of this province. My sentence is that you be taken hence at once beyond the city walls, and there

hanged upon a cross until you be dead. May the gods have mercy on your soul. Longinus, see sentence done. The thieves, Dysmas and Gestas, must hang with him. This be your warrant. Put a scroll on the cross of Jesus, showing his crime.

LONGINUS. What shall I write, lord?

PILATE. I will write for you. Give me the charcoal. Yes, what is it, Petronius?

PETRONIUS. My lord, these people want the criminals dead before the Feast begins at sunset.

PILATE. Longinus, see that the prisoners are dead before sunset. Here is your scroll. Read it.

LONGINUS (*reading*). "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

PILATE. Do your duty. I break up this court.

PETRONIUS. Stand to attention!

LONGINUS. Squad, salute!

OFFICER. Lord Pilate! Lord Pilate!

PETRONIUS. One of the councillors wishes to speak to you, my lord.

PILATE. What is it, then?

OFFICER. My lord, in the scroll for the cross do not write "This is the King of the Jews," but that "He says he is the King of the Jews."

PILATE. What I have written I have written.

(*Exit* PILATE.)

LONGINUS. Squad, left turn!

MARY, MOTHER. What are they doing to him? What are they doing to him?

MARY, WIFE OF CLEO. Oh, for the love of God let him go!

MARY MAG. This is his mother, Officer. Let him say good-bye to his mother!

LONGINUS. Stand back there, you. You've got one minute. Make the most of it.

MARY, MOTHER. Oh, my son, my son!

MARY, WIFE OF CLEO. That ever we should live to see this day! But it's all a pretence. Surely you aren't going to kill him, Officers? He's a good man. He never did anybody harm.

MARY MAG. Oh, Jesus, Jesus! is there anything you want done, or any message sent?

MARY, MOTHER. But this is my son, and they're going to kill him, they're going to kill him!

MARY, WIFE OF CLEO. Oh, misery, misery! O God, I beseech you!

JESUS. Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

(*Indicates the crowd of* JEWS.) For behold the days are coming in the which they shall say "Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bare and the paps which never gave suck." Then shall they begin to say to the mountains "Fall on us," and to the hills "Cover us." For, if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

LONGINUS. Your minute's up. You must come now. Stand back there, madam. Stand back, you people. Squad!

JESUS. "Let not him who seeketh cease from seeking until he hath found. And when he hath found, he shall be amazed. And when he hath been amazed, he shall reign. And when he hath reigned, then he shall have rest."

LONGINUS. Left turn! Right wheel! Quick march!

(JESUS *is marched off.*)

REUBEN. They're going. Come on, brothers.

MALLUCH. They'll stop in the courtyard to fetch the two thieves. They've got to get the crosses yet out of the store.

AMOK. I'm going straight out to the hill.

SHOBEK. Keep a place for me.

MALLUCH. I'm going to find Bar-Abbas. Come on. Hurry, or we shall be late. Come on. Three of them together.

LONGINUS (*off*). Close up, there. Left wheel! Keep your files close.

CURTAIN.

CHORUS.

THE LEADER.

There is a cavern in the central hills
Which Man can enter if he find the way,
And there the gods sit throned in their array,
Waiting for Man, to heal him of his ills.

About the table of a feast they sit,
Like Alps under the stars each in his snows
Waiting a trumpet-call that no one blows,
The call of Man, to bring them out of it.

No mouse creeps to that awful hall for crumbs,
Their soundless commune stirs no spirit's lip,
No sound is there, save now and then a drip;
All tensely wait for Man, who never comes.

Yet once a hunter, prompted by a dream,
Came to the tangled entrance of the cave

And cut himself an entrance and was brave
And reached the gods and saw their faces gleam;

Yet feared not, tiny as he was, to stand
There at the board and watch their faces shine;
He knew their spirits' meaning without sign,
He reached and took the trumpet in his hand,

And blew a faint, uncertain, wavering note
At which each figure shifted in his seat.
He blew again and made the echoes beat,
And sound came from each spirit's mighty throat.

And each great hand stirred and half drew a sword,
And each great form half rose and watched him
there,
So that he screamed and stood with stiffened hair,
And flung the trumpet down upon the board,

And ran, leaving the trumpet-blast unblown,
The third blast that should bring the gods to men.
He was the last to stir them, for since then
None has come near, nor is the entrance known.

Yet once in every hundred years a chant
Comes from the mountain, bidding men to seek;

Men think it is the wind about the peak,
The wind for ever telling of its want.

CHORUS. *To the Iphigenia tune.*

Were but God a stag in cover in the fern-green wood,
Man would bring his hounds to hunt him till he yielded up his good;
Or if God were man's destroyer, man would join with friend
And assail both God and Godhead till he brought them to an end;
Or if God were buried treasure,
Man would dig for him with pleasure,
Dig until his heart were faint and both his hands were skinned;
Or if God were but a mountain, man would scale his peak,
Were he visible in heaven, man would force him to descend.

THE MEN. *To The Horn Dance tune.*

But ah! not thus with passionate pride can God be won by the heart of man;
Man must go from doubt to despair till out of despair he see the plan;

Sorrowful days must test his truth, bitterness be his
daily bread,
Birds in the air will have their nests, he have no rest
for his head.
He shall have pain, he shall know grief, watching
and tears be his friends;
He shall know hate, he shall win death; nothing
shall make him amends.

THE WOMEN. *To the Iphigenia tune.*

But I know that in his sorrow, in his soul's dark night,
His own truth shall shine about him, making all his
darkness bright;
Though the anguish of his trial bite like asps of Nile,
Deep within his spirit's purpose shall seem wholly
worth the while;
Though it drive him from his city,
To be murdered without pity,
His own hope will be his captain who will never cease
to smile;
And I know that if he quail not, our undying friends
Will be brother to his action and will stamp it with
their style.

ACT III

PILATE. So now this day has come to an end like others. The Feast has begun. There will be quiet now.

PETRONIUS. The men are sending an offertory to the temple in a few minutes, lord. Will you speak to the Jews, who come for it?

PILATE. I will come down as soon as I can leave King Herod.

PETRONIUS. I think I hear King Herod now, my lord.

(PETRONIUS *goes off.*)

PILATE. Yes, it is he.

LONGINUS (*off*). Guard, attention! Eyes right! Salute! His Majesty King Herod seeks audience of the Procurator.

(*Enter* HEROD.)

PILATE. Welcome, O King!

HEROD. And to you, Procurator.

PILATE. It is pleasant to receive you here.

HEROD. I am glad to come. Ah! here is my hostess.

PROCULA. Be thrice welcome, King.

PILATE. Shall we sit here? This earthquake weather is close for within doors.

HEROD. Before we sit I wish to thank you, Pilate, for your courtesy this morning. Your husband, Lady Procula, did a very charming thing. He sent me one of my subjects, who had come to be tried before him. It is a little thing, perhaps, but it was scrupulous: it charmed me. I thank you for that. I'm afraid I should not have been so scrupulous had one of your subjects been brought before me. And as it happened, I had heard of this man before; he is one of those healers. He would not heal before me; he seemed a little mad. I sent him back to you. What became of him?

PROCULA. He was crucified.

HEROD. On the Kingship charge? The last thing you or I would want would be to be King. Yet these fellows, directly they have too much or too little of anything, always claim to be Kings. The choice shows how mad they are. And yet there are always madder people who believe them. How very lovely your cloak is, Lady Procula.

PROCULA. I am wearing mourning for that just man whom we did to death this day.

HEROD. The healer? How charming of you. Mourning! Well. But grace misapplied, Lady Procula.

PILATE. No, not quite that, King Herod; there was something fine about that man. I was sorry for him.

HEROD. There is always something fine about these fellows. They imagine something perfectly insane, that they are kings, or daimons, or God Himself, for that matter; and you cannot alter them; you can burn them, or saw them in two, or pull them in four; it makes no difference, they maintain it to the end.

I am a native here, Lady Procula. I have seen this sort of man too often. There was a ruffian of the sort a year or so ago: an ascetic lunatic, who had had few brains to start with, but had lost them all in the desert, living on locusts, or camel's hair, or whatever it is they live on there. Well, this ruffian kept preaching to me about my marriage. I put him into prison, because these fellows have endless energy, and if you shout a thing loud enough and long enough, people are bound to listen. They were listening to this man, but, like them all, he did not take a warning, so I had to end him. They talk

of him still. I sometimes think that the only road to fame is to be mad—at least in this country. Don't you find it so, Lady Procula?

PILATE. You are too near the desert. All men are conscious of God in the desert.

HEROD. I wish you great engineers would irrigate the desert, then. It would pay you in the end. You'd treble your tribute and have none of these religious lunatics. Think of it, Pilate. Suggest it to Cæsar.

PILATE. I did. Cæsar said irrigating the desert means two small wars and one big one. Now forgive me. I must send my offertory to the temple. Three minutes grace, King Herod. (*He leaves the stage.*)

HEROD. An offertory to the temple, Lady Procula? Really, how lovely. Really, if I may say so, how holy. But the question rises, is it wit or humour?

PROCULA. King Herod, may I ask you a question? Are you only appetite and intellect, or have you faith or hope or charity?

HEROD. Charity? I dislike seeing unpleasant things. I give lepers things sometimes to get them out of my way. Hope and faith? No. What should one hope? What can one trust?

PROCULA. Your people believe in God and hope not to die at death.

HEROD. Yes. We actually pay people to keep these old superstitions still alive. In so far as they help my task, which is to govern Galilee, I entirely approve. But come, a God! What do you mean by it? An imagination of a man more important than yourself. I do not favour imaginations which rank anything or anyone as more important than a king. The belief in a life after this life! Really, Lady Procula, really! The very thought is repulsive to me. Think where your thought leads you, dear lady. That these religious lunatics, whom we suppress with such trouble, should be really none the worse for our killings! Be at least a little merciful to me, even if you must mortify yourself with this illusion. We are probably mistakes of nature's. Let us at least comfort ourselves that we do not cumber nature's system unduly long. The parrot, the elephant, and certain fishes, as well as many trees, outlive us. When I read the stories of the past, when men lived to great ages, I see one possible glimmer of progress in Man—a growing tact for cessation.

PROCULA. When you were younger, King Herod,

when you were even more filled with energy than you are to-day, did you never think with horror of being brought to an end suddenly, of being flung into the unknown, as we flung that teacher this morning?

HEROD. Are you not mixing up various things, dear lady? That I, a splendid young man, should be cut off unfulfilled no doubt would be a pretty theme for poetry. But that it would matter to myself, who had ceased to be and could have no knowledge of the matter and could neither rejoice nor be sorry for it, is surely impossible. Reflect that I should be alike spared the poetry of my mourners, if any, and the comment of my critics, however bitter. No; I think I have always been honest. Life is life, and may be known, up to a point; death is death and cannot be. I keep the two distinct. One at a time, dear lady, one at a time.

PROCULA. Do you never consider what the act of death is?

HEROD. Yes, but I have never been able to make up my mind about it, whether it is a pang or a swooning. Sometimes I think one and sometimes the other. But I haven't a speculative mind. You should have asked my father. He made endless

experiments on people. It interested him, and it ended them, and, as a reasonable being, he couldn't expect more. He died unresolved, like the rest of us.

PROCULA. You would be quite content, then, to cease at death?

HEROD. It is not a matter for content or discontent. I am alive on this planet and abide by the limitations of nature. You have been too long in this country without a rest in Italy. Everybody here, after a time, goes mad, in the same way. They all think they're being watched by a bigger madman than themselves, and that, if they aren't careful, this madman will roast them when they are dead. Sometimes I long that that may be true for them, but there are limits even to insanity. I have no illusions about human life. In youth we are senseless and do not know it. In age we are senseless and do know it. To be nothing in death seems to me to be an advance.

PROCULA. But you enjoy life?

HEROD. Surely all people enjoy doing what they please. Surely you, Lady Procula, enjoy life for the same reason?

PROCULA. I am thinking to-day of death.

HEROD. That is a mistake. Man's purpose is life, and it must be evident to everybody that he was never intended to think. But light now your lamp among the tombs, and tell us what you think of death.

(PILATE *re-enters.*)

PROCULA. I am thinking of that teacher who was crucified.

HEROD. Well, he's dead by this time, because of the feast. You were not thinking of questioning him?

(*Enter* LONGINUS.)

LONGINUS. I beg your pardon, my lord.

PILATE. You come to report?

LONGINUS. Yes, my lord.

HEROD. I beg you, Pilate, do not consider me, but hear your excellent centurion.

PILATE. Thank you. What is it?

LONGINUS. That wild man, Bar-Abbas, my lord, whom you released this morning. It did not do him much good. He went down into the pilgrims' quarter this afternoon and roused another riot, and hurt some dozen or so. They have just brought him in and put him into the cells.

PILATE (*to* HEROD). He was sentenced to death at dawn, then spared: now this.

HEROD. I told you just now. You cannot deal

with this people either by cruelty or by mercy. Ending them is the only way, besides being much the cheapest.

PILATE. I must see to this matter.

HEROD. It is this madness in the air: it blows in from the desert. This Bar-Abbas has it; that healer had it; you, centurion, must have a care. Lady Procula, I'm very much afraid, has caught it. As for you, Pilate, you do not seem to mind, but such infection is dangerous to me. I shall withdraw till the air is calm. Farewell, Lady Procula. Cultivate, I beg you, a charming defiance to all these lunacies. I always say that man has only two compensations in this climate—buttered quails and poetry. The quails end in indigestion and the poetry in religion. I never can make up my mind which it is that poisons the liver, the quails or the poetry. But I must go. Thank you, Pilate, for your charming, charming courtesy. By the way, do you think your people could advance me a little money on the security of the fisheries?

PILATE. I will see what can be done.

(*They go off together.*)

PROCULA. Centurion, were you at the killing of that teacher to-day?

LONGINUS. Yes, lady.

PROCULA. Tell me about his death.

LONGINUS. It is hardly fit hearing for you, my lady.

PROCULA. I want to hear it all.

LONGINUS. I will not tell it all, my lady.

PROCULA. Do not tell me all, then, but tell me what he said.

LONGINUS. The people were mocking him at first, and he prayed God to forgive them. He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." There were two thieves hanged with him. One of the thieves cursed him, but the other thief told his fellow to let the king alone. He said, "The king has done nothing wrong. We have." The king turned to him and said, "To-day you shall be with me in Paradise."

PROCULA. Was he suffering much?

LONGINUS. No, lady. He wasn't a strong man. The scourging must have nearly killed him. I thought he was dead by noon, and then suddenly he began to sing in a loud clear voice that he was giving back his spirit to God. I looked to see God come to take him. He died singing. Truly, lady, that man was the Son of God, if one may say that.

PROCULA. Were those women who were with him, there?

LONGINUS. Some of his people were there.

PROCULA. Do you think that you can find out about them for me? Whether they are in any want?

LONGINUS. I couldn't be seen in that myself, my lady. I could set one of the men to find out. I will do that.

PROCULA. What do you think the man believed, centurion?

LONGINUS. He believed that he was God, they say.

PROCULA. What do you think of that claim?

LONGINUS. If a man believes anything up to the point of dying on the cross for it, he will find others to believe it.

PROCULA. Do you believe it?

LONGINUS. He was a fine young fellow, my lady, not past the middle age. And he was all alone and defied all the Jews and all the Romans, and, when we had done with him, he was a poor broken-down thing, dead on the cross.

PROCULA. Do you think he is dead?

LONGINUS. No, lady, I don't.

PROCULA. Then where is he?

LONGINUS. Let loose in the world, lady, where neither Roman nor Jew can stop his truth.

(*Trumpet blows.*)

That's for the setting of the watch, lady.

PROCULA. Good-night, centurion.

(LONGINUS *goes, Right.*)

PROCULA. Let loose in the dark night, with no friend; alone!

(*She goes off slowly, Left; the little bell rings;* JESUS *appears in the centre.*)

JESUS.

I am the man ye scourged and slew;
I hang on the tree ye nailed me to;
I have put off pain, and body, and Jew;
I am spirit of man that God's breath made.
I stand in the darkness here and cry,
"O helpless and friendless, here am I,
A friend who will help you till you die,
And in death not leave you afraid."

I cry, "O brothers and sisters, do
As ye would that men should do to you;
And never despair, though the good be few,
God is kind to unthankful and evil men.
Judge not, brothers, lest life judge thee,

Release, and thy soul shall be set free,
Give, and it shall be given to thee
Good measure, trebled agen.

"Open your heart, open your mind,
If ye bind your souls it is me ye bind;
Ask of me: seek: and ye shall find;
Knock, and behold the door shall yield.
Brothers, I make the world one kin;
Open your hearts and let me in,
That the reign of my Father may begin
And the grave's gates be sealed.

FINAL CHORUS. *Iphigenia music.*

(*The curtains half close. The stage is dark, but the front stage is lit. The* CHORUS *rise facing each other.*)

LEADER (WOMEN). Many are the sorrows that beset our way
From the darkness of our dawning to the ending of our day.

LEADER (MEN). Yet at all times men have striven with their lives' whole force
To bring light into the darkness that may guide men on their course.

(*Both parties move to the centre.*)

Light that shines and never passes,
Though men wither like the grasses.

(*They turn from the lower stage, walk in two files, to the back of the upper stage, turn Right and Left, and go off as they sing :—*)

Light that is the brightness of the soul that made it shine,
Lovely is the spirit that will give his days
To bring beauty to his brothers who are lost upon earth's ways.

END OF PLAY.

NOTE

THIS play was written for production upon a small stage on two levels with a balcony above it at the back. The fore, or lower stage, was used mainly for the Chorus, who sat, when not singing, upon stools at the sides. In certain moments of the action some of the actors came down to this lower stage: the main performance took place upon the upper stage. The balcony could be entered by a staircase at each side. Most of the exits and entrances of the performers were made from staircases leading downwards from the back of the stage to the dressing-rooms. There was no scenery. The balcony was hung with curtains which served as a back-cloth to the scene.

The draw-curtains used at the ends of acts ran along the line of the single step dividing the upper stage from the lower. When they were drawn, the Chorus on the lower stage sang while the stage above them was being set for the next act.

NOTE

The music used for the Choruses was as follows: a minuet by Haydn, a gavotte by Gluck, and the old English tune of the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance.

If an interval be desired between the First and Second Acts of this play, the following choruses and directions may be substituted for those now at the end of the First Act.

After the curtains have been drawn, the Chorus rise and sing the following, to the Haydn air :—

Now by mean streets they hasten to the Roman governor,
To press their charge before the Feast,
That so he may be cast and slain.
They pass the stalls
Where country-women offer doves
And sprigs of mint and sprays of bitter herbs.

The curtains open to let them pass : the parties turn towards each other and move to the upper stage, singing :—

They pass the crowds already gathered in each open place,
And climb the steps towards the court where Roman trumpets with shrill throats call Pontius Pilate to his task.

Five minutes interval.

NOTE

At the end of the interval, the Chorus reappear and take their places, singing :—

Now as we sing, the Roman soldiers gather to their court,
To hear the charge the Jews prefer,
And mock them as they press their case.
Their trumpets sound;
Their brazen gates are opened wide;
Their steel-shod feet ring sharp upon the barrack stones,
They stand to arms, their spears erect, their faces turned and tense,
As from the tribune, golden-helmed, there comes the cry that locks their ranks, "Lord Pilate enters to his Court."

As they take their places, the curtains are drawn, discovering the upper stage, with Pilate standing by the seat of judgment and Petronius awaiting orders.

The speech of Jesus on page 79 is taken from *The Sayings of Jesus from Oxyrhynchus*, edited by the late Hugh G. Evelyn White, M.A. (Cambridge University Press, 1920). I thank the Rev. C. H. Evelyn White for permitting me to quote the Saying.

JOHN MASEFIELD.

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